

II. REMARKS

Applicants have read and considered the Office Action dated April 11, 2003 and the references cited therein.

Preliminary Comments

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's allowance of claims 53-83 and 106-155, as indicated in paragraph 8 of the Office Action.

Summary of the Amendments

The present application has 107 claims currently pending.

Claims 1-29, 34-42, 48-52, 84 and 100-103 have been cancelled from the present application without prejudice. Applicants reserve the right to pursue these claims in a continuation application filed prior to the issuance of the present application.

Claims 30, 43, 85 and 104 have been amended in accordance with the Examiner's suggestions. No new matter has been added to the present application under the current amendment.

Summary of the Rejection and Reply

In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-4, 6-10, 12-17, 19, 21, 40, 48 and 50 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,729,210 (hereafter to be referred to as Kiriyama). In addition, the Examiner has rejected claims 5, 11, 18, 20, 22, 26-29, 34-39, 41, 42, 49, 51, 52, 48, and 100-103 under 35 USC §103(a) as being obvious over Kiriyama.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-29, 34-42, 48-52, 84 and 100-103 have been cancelled from the present application, and as such, the Examiner's rejections are rendered moot.

In the Office Action, claims 53-83 and 106-155 were allowed. Applicants thank the Examiner for the allowance of these claims.

In the Office Action, the Examiner has objected to claims 30-33, 43-47, 85-99, 104 and 105 for being dependent upon rejected base claims. However, the Examiner indicates that these claims would be considered allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations contained in their respective base claims and intervening claims. Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter.

Accordingly, claims 30, 43, 85 and 104 have been amended such that they are now in independent form and include all the limitations contained in their respective base claims and intervening claims. As such, it is now believed that claims 30-33, 43-47, 85-99 and 104-105 are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

Once again, the Applicants respectfully acknowledge the allowance of claims 53-83 and 106-155 of the present application.

Furthermore, in view of the above, it is submitted that claims 30-33, 43-47, 85-99 and 104-105 are also in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the rejections and objections is requested. Allowance of claims 30-33, 43-47, 85-99 and 104-105 at an early date is solicited.

If the claims of the application are not considered to be in full condition for allowance, for any reason, Applicants respectfully request the constructive assistance and suggestions of the Examiner in drafting one or more acceptable claims or in making constructive suggestions so that the application can be placed in allowable condition as soon as possible and without the need for further proceedings. If the Examiner feels that a telephone interview may be helpful in this matter, please contact Applicants' Representative at (612) 336-4728.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.

Dated:

7/11/03

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